



Adult Bible Study Lesson Summary for October 18, 2020

Released on Tuesday, October 13, 2020

"Love for Neighbors"

Lesson Text: Luke 10:25-37

Background Scripture: Leviticus 19:18, 34; Luke 10:25-37

Devotional Reading: John 5:1-15

Bible Land Map: Set 17, Map#111, Jesus in Judea and Jerusalem (log in for maps at <https://www.jesusisall.com/amember3/>)

Luke 10:25-37 (KJV)

25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself.

28 And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

29 But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour?

30 And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

31 And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.

32 And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side.

33 But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him,

34 And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him.

35 And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee.

36 Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?

37 And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

LESSON AIMS

Learning Fact: To define *neighbor* as Jesus does and provide current examples.

Biblical Principle: To look for opportunities to love as God loves.

Daily Application: To use what God has given us to bless our neighbors.

HOW TO SAY IT

Lucan Lu-kehr.

INTRODUCTION

Good Samaritans at Altitude

Late in September 2018, Joshua Mason and his girlfriend, Katie Davis, flew from Texas to Colorado. The next day Joshua took Katie on a hike in the mountains, northwest of Denver. After hiking about eight miles, they reached the nearly 13,000-foot summit of Jasper Peak. Joshua was hoping to find an isolated and beautiful spot to “pop the question.” Jasper Peak provided such a location, and Katie said yes to the surprise proposal.

But then things took a turn. Because they did not leave the trailhead till about noon and the trail to Jasper Peak is not clearly marked, the newly engaged couple became lost and disoriented when it started to get dark. Far from cell-phone service, they were not equipped or dressed to camp overnight in the cold of the high country, and they only had a little water. Coming to a cliff and unable to go any further, they began yelling for help.

About midnight, a camper who was hiking in the area heard their screams. When he discovered Joshua and Katie, they were showing signs of altitude sickness and severe dehydration. He led them to a group of his friends who were camping at a nearby lake. The campers provided the couple with water, food, and shelter in their tent, trying to help them get warm. But recognizing the seriousness of the situation, one of the campers hiked down to her vehicle and drove to where she could call 911.

Rescue crews reached Joshua and Katie about 4:30 a.m. Determining that they needed to move to a lower altitude immediately, the rescuers escorted them down to the trailhead.

This story includes several Good Samaritans who went out of their way to help Joshua and Katie. In the current lesson, we will consider the Scripture passage that prompted that now-common term.

LESSON CONTEXT

In his Gospel, Luke recounts Jesus’ ministry in three major sections: (1) events in and around Galilee (Luke 4:14–9:50); (2) Jesus on His way to Jerusalem (9:51–19:44); and (3) the events of Jesus’ final week in Jerusalem (19:45–24:53). Luke’s Gospel is unique in its central section, which begins shortly before the lesson text. Most of the parables found in Luke are in this section, the first being the parable in our text.

A primary theme of Jesus’ ministry in Judea was God’s love for the lost and lowly: sinners (example: Luke 15), outcasts (example: 14:15–24), Samaritans, and the poor (example: 16:19–31). Jesus’ countercultural teaching challenges us to demonstrate inclusive love even toward our enemies. The lesson text calls us once again to practice inclusive love. In the passage just prior to our text (10:1–24), Jesus sent out 70 of His followers in pairs to proclaim, through word and deed, that “the kingdom of God is come nigh unto you” (10:9). Both Jesus and His 70 emissaries rejoiced at God’s power working through them (10:17–21).

Immediately preceding the lesson passage, Jesus spoke with His 70 followers at the conclusion of their fruitful mission (Luke 10:17–20). Although some commentators view Jesus’

interaction with this “lawyer” (10:25) as an interruption of His debriefing discussion with the disciples, the exact time and place of this scene is unspecified.

This parable is unique to Luke, but its subject matter and setting are like texts found in Matthew and Mark. Matthew 22:34–40 and Mark 12:28–34, are clearly parallel to one another, but the connection to Luke is less certain (compare Luke 10:27). The Lucan event appears to be a separate incident covering the same theme.

Questioning: Luke 10:25-29

1. What question did a lawyer raise to test Jesus? (Luke 10:25, 26)

This man was not a *lawyer* in the sense familiar to us, but rather was a scholar educated in the Old Testament law and the Jewish traditions surrounding it. The fact that the lawyer *stood up* indicates that Jesus was speaking, and His listeners were sitting. This was a typical, respectful pose when listening to a rabbi teach.

The idea of tempting is the same as in Jesus’ temptation (Luke 4:1–13), which can be appropriately also considered a test. Evidently the lawyer was not sincerely seeking to be taught by Jesus as much as he was interested in how Jesus would answer. We must wonder if the lawyer was hoping to show up Jesus.

By calling Jesus *Master*, the lawyer at least wanted to give the impression that he respected Jesus. His question conveyed a perspective of salvation by works.

Instead of answering immediately, Jesus asked His own questions. Given the fact that the questioner is a Jewish scholar, it is fitting that Jesus asked him *how* he read and interpreted *the law*.

2. How did the lawyer respond to Jesus’ question concerning his interpretation of the law? (Luke 10:27, 28)

The lawyer’s reply alludes to the great Shema of Deuteronomy 6:5, which Jews recited daily: “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might.” To that the lawyer adds the law of neighbor love found in Leviticus 19:18: “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.” These answers showed that the lawyer knew mere rule-keeping was not the path to life. Instead, love of God expressed as love for neighbor leads to life. This combination of loving the Lord your God and loving your neighbor as yourself has become known as the “great commandment.” Jesus’ seemingly final word to the lawyer was this commendation of the man’s *right* answer.

3. What additional question did the lawyer ask Jesus? Why? (Luke 10:29)

The lawyer found himself challenged and so looked to *justify himself*. Although the lawyer acknowledged previously that Leviticus 19:18— “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself—is a summary statement of the law (see Luke 10:27), he took advantage of the ambiguity of the word *neighbour*. In the original context of Leviticus 19:18, love for neighbors is love for fellow Israelites, although that love was to be extended to “strangers” who came to Israel from another land and lived among them (see Leviticus 19:33–34). The land of Israel in Jesus’ day under Roman occupation was comprised of many who were not Israelites.

With his question, the lawyer clearly seemed to be trying to create a distinction, making the point that some people are neighbors (and thus required to be loved) and some people are not. The notion that some people are *not* neighbors is what Jesus addressed in His parable.

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances, if any, should Christians ask questions regarding who should be helped and who should not?

Digging Deeper

How do Matthew 5:45; 10:16; 2 Thessalonians 3:10; 1 Timothy 5:3-12; 2 John 9-11; and 3 John 5-8 help frame your answer?

Won't You Be a Neighbor?

Mister Rogers' Neighborhood began airing in 1968 and ran for 895 episodes. Dressed in his signature cardigan sweater, Mr. Rogers invited children to visit his neighborhood with his theme song, "Won't You Be My Neighbor?"

Fred Rogers trained to be a Presbyterian minister but decided to go into television because he hated the medium of TV! While children's programming typically featured animation and frantic action, Rogers labeled those features as "bombardment." He did not play a character as did his contemporaries like Captain Kangaroo and Soupy Sales. Rogers believed that being one's honest self was one of the greatest gifts one person could give to another.

Fred Rogers was not afraid to expand his neighborhood. During a time of racial segregation, Mr. Rogers was shown cooling his feet in a pool on a hot day with Officer Clemmons, an African American policeman. In addition, Rogers championed children with disabilities on the show, including having a young quadriplegic boy demonstrate how a young quadriplegic boy demonstrate how a wheelchair worked. Rogers did not ask, "Who is my neighbor?" He knew!

—J. E.

Storytelling: Luke 10:30-37

4. How did Jesus answer the lawyer's question? (Luke 10:30)

Rather than answering the lawyer's question directly, Jesus told a story. Like other Jewish teachers in His time, Jesus used a parable to explain a Scripture text—in this case, Leviticus 19:18. Since the details of parables were true to life, we can increase our understanding of the parable by exploring the historical and cultural contexts supporting it.

Although Jesus' audience likely assumed the opening character to have been a Jew, Jesus never specified his identity. The man remains anonymous throughout the story.

Since *Jerusalem* is about 2,500 feet above sea level and *Jericho* is about 800 feet below sea level, a traveler setting out from Jerusalem certainly would have gone *down* to reach Jericho (log in for maps at <https://www.jesusisall.com/amember3/> See Set 17, Map#111, Jesus in Judea and Jerusalem). Winding its way through rocky desert, this 17-mile road was infamous for its danger. The caves along the way presented *thieves* with numerous opportunities to ambush travelers.

Jesus focused on the violent mistreatment the man received at the hands of the thieves. They were not content to simply take *his raiment*, or garments; the thieves left him for *dead*.

5. Why didn't the priest and the Levite stop to help the wounded man? (Luke 10:31, 32)

Priests, who were descendants of Levi and Aaron, served as God's representatives to the people; Levites served as assistants to priests (2 Chronicles 13:10). So, why didn't these servants of God serve the wounded man? Some speculate that they feared becoming ritually

unclean, and thus unable to fulfill their religious duties, by touching what appeared to be a dead body (see Leviticus 21:1–4; Numbers 5:2; etc.).

This argument has been countered by geography: to go *down* from Jerusalem indicated that they had completed their temple responsibilities and were heading home. In addition, the Jewish practice was to bury a dead person on the same day. This should have compelled both priest and Levite to investigate the victim's status regarding that requirement.

But before getting too deep into the weeds of speculative mind-reading, we remind ourselves that this is a fictional story—a parable to make a point. Since no motive is stated by Jesus, there is no motive to be discerned. The characters of negligent priest and Levite serve as the stark backdrop to what comes next.

6. What was the Samaritan man's reaction to the wounded man? (Luke 10:33)

The Jews in Jesus' day despised the Samaritans and refused to associate with them (4:9). And of course, the feelings were mutual. Needless to say, a Samaritan would be the last person a Jew would expect to show *compassion*. This Samaritan man was moved with *compassion* towards the wounded man.

7. What efforts did the Samaritan take to help the wounded man? (Luke 10:34)

In stark contrast to the inactivity of the priest and the Levite, the Samaritan actively ministered to the needy man. Both Jews and Greeks appear to have used *wine* and *oil* widely for medicinal purposes. Wine would have been used to clean the man's wounds, the alcohol having an antiseptic effect. Olive oil would ease the man's pain. The Samaritan then *set him on his own beast*, likely a donkey, which means he himself now had to walk. Inns were places of potential danger, not just for theft but also potentially murder. But from beginning to end, the Samaritan considered the *care* of the injured man of greater value than the risk involved.

A. What Do You Think?

What has experience taught you about compassion that is *reactive* (sees a problem happen, then helps) versus *proactive* (anticipates a problem, then helps before it happens)?

Digging Deeper

In which type of compassion can you help your church improve most?

B. What Do You Think?

If you saw a car broken down on the side of the road, would using a cell phone to call for assistance be the same as stopping to offer help personally? Why, or why not?

Digging Deeper

If stopping to help personally meant risking your own safety in the process, would you do it?

8. In what way did the Samaritan go above and beyond to help the wounded man? (Luke 10:35)

The Samaritan showed compassion for someone he didn't know, risked his own life, and now spent his own money (two days' wages for a laborer) to put this total stranger up in a hotel until he returned. As Jonathan interceded with his father, King Saul, on David's behalf (1 Samuel 19:1–7), here the Samaritan interceded on the wounded man's behalf. Both Jonathan and the Samaritan demonstrated faithful love—Jonathan in the context of an existing covenant and the Samaritan in his obvious regard for human life.

What Do You Think?

Under what circumstances is it better to help others through efforts of group ministries rather than personally?

Digging Deeper

How do the changing procedures of Acts 2:45; 4:32-35; 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 5:3-11 inform your response?

Directing: Luke 10:36, 37

9. In what way did Jesus' question shift the thought of the lawyer? (Luke 10:36, 37a)

Having finished His parable, Jesus countered the lawyer's question with one of His own. The lawyer had asked "Who is my neighbour?" (Luke 10:29). Jesus changed the question and shifted the focus to, "Who acted like a neighbor?" In Jesus' view, trying to identify whom one is called to love is an obvious attempt to relinquish responsibility. To do so is to reveal one's motivation of trying to find ways to avoid obeying God rather than embracing the call to love as God loves.

The lawyer cannot bring himself to say the word *Samaritan*! As a Jew, he could not fathom the notion of a good Samaritan. But at least the lawyer grasped the point of Jesus' parable, recognizing the mercy and action that set the Samaritan apart from the priest and the Levite. Just as the lawyer "answered right" in the first exchange (Luke 10:27-28), so he answered correctly here. However, his avoidance of saying the word *Samaritan* perhaps revealed that the lawyer still considered some people neighbors and others unworthy of that designation.

10. What was Jesus' final word to the lawyer? (Luke 10:37b)

Jesus told the lawyer to "Go, and do thou likewise" (compare Luke 10:28). The lawyer appeared to be hoping that he could limit his responsibility by being a neighbor to only a select few. With this profound parable, Jesus conveyed that rather than calculating who is a neighbor and who is not, the lawyer should heed Jesus' call to *be* a neighbor to whoever crosses his path.

This is the only reference to this lawyer in the Bible. We do not know how he responded to Jesus' message. Did he embrace it and act on it?

"The big question is, 'To whom can I be a neighbor?' and this has nothing to do with geography, citizenship, or race. Wherever people need us, there we can be neighbors and, like Jesus Christ, show mercy.

CONCLUSION

Looking for a Loophole

By asking the question "Who is my neighbor?" the lawyer in the lesson text was looking for a loophole—a loophole of being able to choose whom he was responsible to care about and care for. Surely God did not intend for him to love *all* people. Surely some people did not merit his time and resources. Not!

Like the lawyer, we can be guilty of looking for a loophole. When we hear the Bible's teaching about loving our neighbors as ourselves, we can grasp the meaning in principle that we are to love and serve people everywhere in need. But it is tempting to embrace the thought in a way that leads to no tangible action. Or we can be tempted to care for those neighbors who look like us, speak like us, or share our social status, and we fail to care for those who are different. How could Jesus possibly mean that *every single person* is someone we should strive to love?

Jesus' parable in the lesson leaves no room for self-justification. If we are looking for a way out of loving that person who is too difficult, or in too much trouble, or frankly probably wouldn't help us if the tables were turned, then we betray our hearts that do not love as God loves. Instead of looking for loopholes, let us search for opportunities to use what God has given us to bless *all* our neighbors.

What Do You Think?

Case study: Your next-door neighbor, who is a single mother, calls you from jail asking you to post her \$5,000 bond. You have the money but discover that is only the 10 percent cash portion required. The other 90 percent must come from the court's putting a lien on your house. What do you do?

PRAYER

Thank You, Lord, for giving us the great commandment for Your glory and our fulfillment. We want to love You with all that is within us. And we want to love our neighbors—whomever You place before us—in the same way we love ourselves. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

THOUGHT TO REMEMBER

Good Samaritans ask, "How can I *be* a neighbor?"

ANTICIPATING THE NEXT LESSON

Next week's lesson is "**Love Never Fails**" and explains the characteristics of charity (love) and how love is essential for using the gifts God has given us. Study 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

LESSON SUMMARIZED BY

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